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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. HUMANITARIAN ROLE IN HAITI; JANUARY 23-25, 2010; BUENOS AIRES

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01/23-25/10; BUENOS AIRES

SUMMARY

1. Press coverage of U.S. relief efforts in Haiti was mostly positive over the last three days, highlighting the humanitarian nature of the U.S. role. Local media welcomed the U.S.-U.N. agreement putting the U.N. in charge of security operations, following concerns over the use of U.S. troops. State-owned Telam wire service agency also reported positively on Assistant Secretary Arturo Valenzuela's remarks that Brazil and the UN are responsible for Haiti's security and that Washington will only play a humanitarian role. While one op-ed stated that the U.S. is the only country in a position to take charge of relief efforts, others reported that Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez blamed the U.S. for occupying Haiti, and opined that peace-keeping missions in the country have been fruitless for the last 17 years. Clarin noted that the U.S. "sealed its doors to illegal immigrants" from Haiti. Facebook reaction generally praised U.S. relief efforts. End summary.

PRESS WELCOMES U.S. HUMANITARIAN ROLE

2. Leading circulation Clarin's reporter on the ground, who has been critical of the U.S. military deployment, on January 23 headlined "Haiti's ordinary life and future in the hands of the U.S.," stating the U.S. had "no other alternative" but sending troops as part of relief operations. The article noted an improving situation in Haiti, highlighting an increased presence of local police.

2. Clarin also welcomed the U.S.-UN agreement whereby the UN and Brazil will take charge of security in Haiti, with the U.S. focusing on humanitarian efforts. The agreement came as a result of "tensions between American soldiers and officials of the international organization over relief operations." State-owned Telam wire service agency (01/22) also reported positively on Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Arturo Valenzuela's remarks that the U.S. would "only provide humanitarian aid," while Brazil and the UN would be responsible for security operations in Haiti.

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/01/23/elmundodo/i-02125516.htm>

HAITI, A TEST FOR HUMANITARIANISM AND U.S. LEADERSHIP

¶4. Clarin ran three op-eds urging Washington to improve cooperation with other countries and to see the Haiti crisis as an opportunity to reestablish a positive regional leadership role. January 25 Clarin carried two op-eds with differing views on the U.S. leading role. While one dismissed the idea of U.S. occupation and criticism from Venezuela and Nicaragua and stressed that the U.S. is the only country in a position to take charge of the Haitian crisis, the other warned about an eventual U.S. protectorate, noting that Haiti epitomizes the test of humanitarian efforts.

¶5. A January 24 Clarin op-ed by Fabian Bosoer, political analyst, termed the Haiti tragedy as President Obama's "9/11." He also underscored that "the preservation of the U.S. international leading role will largely depend on how the rescue of Haiti is carried out."

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/01/25/opinion/o-02126657.htm>

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/01/25/opinion/o-02126658.htm>

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/01/23/opinion/o-02125412.htm>

¶6. Rosendo Fraga, political analyst and head of Centro de Estudios Nueva Mayoria think tank, opined in centrist Perfil that the success of U.S. relief efforts in Haiti have allowed the U.S. to "justify the reactivation of the Fourth Fleet, while rejecting accusations from Venezuela and its allies that it was planning to occupy the country." Fraga also highlights Secretary Clinton's visit to Haiti to help coordinate relief efforts with the UN.

PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS SHOULD BE REPLACED BY STATE-BUILDING MISSIONS

¶7. January 25 pro-government, left-of-center Pagina 12 echoed critical remarks from Cuban former leader Fidel Castro that the U.S. is "occupying Haiti." According to the article, Castro also criticized the U.S. and UN for "failing to explain the movement of (armed) forces." A January 23 Pagina 12 opinion piece criticized peacekeeping missions, arguing that they have been fruitless during the last 17 years. It says that for real reconstruction of the country, assistance should be "state-building" oriented instead of humanitarian. Furthermore, peacekeeping missions should be replaced by civilian missions with a considerable reduction of the current 8,000 troops while sending engineers, architects, physicians, lawyers and public management professionals.

http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/sociedad/su_bnotas/139006-44919-2010-01-25.html

http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/sociedad/su_bnotas/138918-44894-2010-01-23.html

U.S. "SEALS ITS DOORS TO IMMIGRANTS"

18. January 24 Clarin noted that the U.S. has "sealed its doors to illegal immigrants" coming from Haiti, who would be sent to tents set up next to the Guantanamo prison in Cuba.
<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/01/24/elmundo/i-02126187.htm>

FACEBOOK FANS PRAISE U.S. RELIEF EFFORTS

19. Messages posted by Embassy Facebook fans praised U.S. humanitarian assistance in Haiti. Messages generally highlighted the key role the U.S. is playing in organizing the distribution of food and supplies and medical services.

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